

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 14-93—sSB 229
Committee on Children
Education Committee
Appropriations Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST PREVENTION

SUMMARY: This act requires the State Board of Education (SBE), starting with the July 1, 2015 school year, and in consultation with specified organizations, to develop or approve a sudden cardiac arrest awareness education program for use by local and regional boards of education. SBE also must develop and approve, by July 1, 2015, an informed consent form on sudden cardiac arrest for distribution to students' parents and legal guardians. Sudden cardiac arrest occurs when the heart suddenly and unexpectedly stops beating.

The act requires, starting July 1, 2015, coaches of intramural and interscholastic athletics to (1) give the consent form to, and obtain the written consent of, a student's parent or legal guardian before allowing a student to participate in such athletic activities and (2) annually review the sudden cardiac arrest awareness education program before beginning their coaching assignments. Beginning with the July 1, 2015 school year, the act immunizes coaches from personal and professional liability for any action or omission, except those constituting willful misconduct, gross negligence, or recklessness, in connection with these requirements.

Existing law already requires school boards to indemnify school employees and volunteers, including coaches, against financial loss and expense resulting from alleged negligence or other acts arising from their duties, subject to similar exceptions (CGS § 10-235).

The act does not relieve coaches of their duties or obligations under state law, regulations, or a collective bargaining agreement. It allows SBE, starting with the July 1, 2015 school year, to revoke the permit of a coach who fails to annually review the sudden cardiac arrest awareness education program. By law, SBE may revoke a permit for specified reasons, including obtaining a permit through fraud or neglecting to perform the duties for which the permit was granted.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2014

SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST AWARENESS EDUCATION PROGRAM

The act requires SBE, for each school year, starting July 1, 2015, to develop or approve a sudden cardiac arrest awareness education program for use by local and regional school boards. SBE must do so in consultation with (1) the public health commissioner; (2) the governing authority for intramural and interscholastic athletics; (3) an appropriate organization representing licensed athletic trainers; and (4) an organization representing national, state, or local

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medical associations. SBE may use material developed by such organizations as Simon's Fund in developing or approving the program (see BACKGROUND).

The program, which must be published on SBE's website, must include the:

1. warning signs and symptoms associated with sudden cardiac arrest, including fainting, difficulty breathing, chest pain, dizziness, and abnormal racing heart rate;
2. risks associated with continuing to engage in intramural or interscholastic athletics after displaying these signs and symptoms;
3. means of obtaining proper medical treatment for someone suspected of experiencing sudden cardiac arrest; and
4. proper method of allowing a student who has experienced sudden cardiac arrest to return to intramural or interscholastic athletics.

Under the act, "intramural or interscholastic athletics" means any activity sponsored by a school, local education agency, or agency-sanctioned organization involving an athletic contest, practice, scrimmage, competition, demonstration, display, or club activity.

CONSENT FORM

By July 1, 2015, SBE must develop and approve an informed consent form on sudden cardiac arrest to distribute to parents and legal guardians of students participating in intramural or interscholastic athletics. SBE must do this in consultation with the same organizations with which it developed or approved the sudden cardiac arrest awareness education program. The form must include, at a minimum, a summary of the (1) program and (2) applicable school board's policies on sudden cardiac arrests.

COACHES' RESPONSIBILITIES

For the July 1, 2015 school year and each year afterwards, anyone who holds or has received an SBE coaching permit and who coaches intramural or interscholastic athletics must, before beginning his or her coaching assignment for the season, give each participating student's parent or legal guardian a copy of the consent form. The coach must obtain the signature of the parent or legal guardian acknowledging that he or she has received the form and authorizes the student to participate. Starting with the July 1, 2015 school year, coaches must annually review the sudden cardiac arrest awareness program before beginning their coaching assignments.

BACKGROUND

Simon's Fund

According to its website, Simon's Fund is a Pennsylvania 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to raising awareness about conditions that lead to sudden cardiac arrest and death in young athletes and children.

Automatic External Defibrillators

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By law, a school board must have at each school in its jurisdiction, if funding is available, (1) an automatic external defibrillator and (2) school staff trained in its use and in cardiopulmonary resuscitation. The law also requires each school to develop emergency action response plans for school personnel responding to individuals experiencing sudden cardiac arrest or similar life-threatening emergencies (CGS § 10-212d).

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